

The Sunday School.

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 24.

Paul Before King Agrippa.—Acts 26:19-32.

Golden Text.—Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father in heaven. Matt. 10:32.

Lesson Thought.—The Christian enjoys greater freedom in chains and bonds than a king on his throne living in sin.

INTRODUCTION.

For your daily readings begin where the last lesson closed and read to the end of to-day's lesson.

1. Felix expected money of Paul. 24:26, 27.
2. The Jews accuse Paul before Festus. 25:1-7.
3. He answers for himself. 25:8-10.
4. He appeals to Cæsar. 25:11-13.
5. Festus opens the matter to king Agrippa and declares Paul innocent. 25:14-27.
6. In the presence of Agrippa Paul tells the story of his life from childhood and relates his miraculous conversion. 26:1-8.

MEANING OF THE TEXT.

19. *Whereupon.* Upon hearing the call in the vision which he had on his way to Damascus. *Disobedient—vision.* He did not become disobedient. See 26:14. For an account of the vision read Acts 9:1-9; 22:5-21; 26:12-19.

20. *Shewed first.* Made known, preached to. *Damascus.* Immediately after his conversion, (9:20) and after his return to Arabia (9:25; Gal. 1:18.) *Judea.* No record is preserved of this preaching, but there was ample time to do it for there were eight years from his conversion to the first missionary journey. *Repent.* The first step in turning to God is to believe in him and then *change* the life. *Works—meet.* Such works as proved the repentance to be sincere.

22. *Obtained help.* The divine help alone could succor. *I continue.* Paul believes in and recognizes the providence of God.

23. *Christ.* The Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures. *Suffer.* Die that he might make atonement for sin. *Rise—dead.* And in so doing become a *light* to all peoples.

24. As Paul was making his defense Festus cried out in astonishment that he was *mad* because of his much learning. He accuses Paul of being beside himself in appeals to the sacred writings. Among the Jews *much learning* meant much theology.

25. *Truth—soberness.* Festus thought Paul fanciful, but Paul declares that his

words are of the most vital and eternal concern for they relate to eternal life and happiness.

26-28. Paul now appeals to the king. *These things.* The work and teachings of Jesus, his death, and the subsequent work of his disciples. *Prophets.* This term is put for the whole Jewish Scriptures. Agrippa was a Jew and had been instructed in the prophets. *Almost—Christian.* The R. V. is better, *With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian.* That is, Do you think with such little effort and argument, or in so little time to make me a Christian?

29. Paul replies that his most earnest prayer to God is that *whether with little or much* not only the king but all who hear him might be Christians.

30-32. *King rose.* Unwilling to hear more of Paul the assembly now broke up. The king arose and then the others in their order. *Death—bonds.* The decision of this royal court was a just one, that Paul had not merited either death or imprisonment. *Appealed to Cæsar.* Paul had made an appeal to Cæsar and so this lower court could neither condemn or set free.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

1. *Not Disobedient.*—Paul justifies his course before the king because it was in obedience to a heavenly vision. Have we been obedient to these heavenly visions as Paul was? They may not come to us as they did to him, but we all have heavenly visions of some kind. They come to young people inviting them away from evil to pure, good, true and divine things. The Christian mother's teachings, every sermon in which Christ is lifted up, every time you read a verse of Scripture, every bit of loveliness we see in human life or in the life of Christ, every pure life that attracts us and kindles in us desires and aspirations for higher attainments, these with many others are heavenly visions and whenever we turn away from them we disobey the heavenly vision. God is constantly calling us up higher, to purer lives, and we should yield and follow every one as an angel sent from heaven to woo us nearer to God. Let us see that we are not disobedient to the heavenly visions that come to us in life.

2. *Obtained Help.*—It was now nearly twenty-five years since Paul obeyed that heavenly vision and these were years of hard toil amid dangers and among enemies. But Paul had held out, he did not falter nor turn aside as the manner of some is. He had made a grand record and the secret of it all is found in verse 22, "having therefore obtained the help that is from God." Young people need not fear to start out on the Christian life

with such an example before them. Foreseeing the danger, they often fear to begin the Christian life not knowing whether they can hold out. Let such fears be dismissed. They will obtain help from God for every duty, for every struggle and for every temptation. The faithful in Christ will have this help.

3. *Almost.*—Whether these words were meant as a sneer or not does not matter. The great opportunity for salvation had come to Agrippa and he threw it away as thousands of others do. Many come as near salvation as Agrippa was and yet are lost. They are almost persuaded: almost is but to be lost, and the saddest of all words in the day of judgment will be, "Almost, but lost." Let the unpersuaded turn in with the overtures of mercy without delay.

HINTS FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT.

1. What is your understanding of order in the Sunday-school?
2. Do you ever study yourself? If you do not have order in the Sunday-school, the fault may lie with you. Examine yourself as to the quality needed, and see if anything is lacking.
3. You have put away that bell? Good. That means progress. Keep it up, and put away other things which hinder progress in other directions.
4. A superintendent once said that nothing short of the falling in of the roof should be allowed to interrupt the teacher during the lesson time. Were you that superintendent? No? But you agree with him, of course?
5. But the distinguished visitor—a prominent Sunday-school worker—must be shown your school? Why, of course. But if the visitor is a *thoughtful* Sunday-school worker as well as a *prominent* one, he will not allow you to disturb classes on his account. There are times for seeing the school other than the lesson time.
6. Just look at that poor teacher! First the secretary came to see her about a scholar. Then the librarian came about a lost book. And then,—is it possible?—right in the middle of the lesson, the pastor stopped to shake hands and inquire after her folks. And look! there comes a member of the Children's Day Concert Committee. If you have any pity in your heart, head her off, and stand guard over that teacher for the remainder of the lesson half hour.
8. How have things gone since you adopted the plan of making out a session program? Splendidly? That is good. You have better order, better attention, and hence accomplish more in the hour? Well, system is of some value, after all, isn't it.—*Superintendent and Teacher.*